Christmas Tree Safety Tips

A fire on any day seems bad, but a fire on Christmas seems to be the worst. Some 300 Christmas trees caught fire in one recent year, with electrical problems the most common culprit. Here's how to keep your tree green and your presents safe.

1. When you buy your tree, have the vendor make a fresh cut an inch from the bottom; this will help the tree drink.
2. If you buy your tree early and keep it outside, store it away from wind and sun, and keep the bottom in a bucket of water.
3. Make sure your lights are safe. If you need outdoor lights, make sure the ones you buy are meant for outdoor use. Make sure your lights carry certification from a testing laboratory.
4. Don't use electric lights on a metal tree.
5. Discard any strings of lights that are frayed or broken. Christmas lights are cheap.
6. Unplug your Christmas tree before you leave or go to bed.
7. Don't buy a tree that is dry and dropping needles. To check for freshness, loosely grip the end of a branch and pull your hand over it. Only a few needles should fall off.
8. Make sure your tree stand holds plenty of water, and don't let it run out.
9. If your tree seems wobbly, center it in the stand more securely and redo the bolts or screws. Of if your tree stand is cheap, buy a larger, stronger one.
10. If you buy an artificial tree, make sure it is fire-retardant.
11. Keep your tree at least three feet from furnaces, radiators and fireplaces.
12. try to position it near an outlet so that cords are not running long distances. Do not place the tree where it may block exits.
13. When Christmas is over or when the tree starts to drop needles, dispose of it. Don't leave it in your house or put it in your garage.
14. Keep a close eye on small children when they are around the tree; many small decorations and ornaments are sharp, breakable and can be swallowed.